

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 6 is amended herein.

All pending claims and their present status are produced below. 1. (Previously Presented) A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:

communicating to a supplier a featured item quantity and a featured item time reservation;

receiving the supplier's consent to reserve the featured item quantity for the negotiated featured item time reservation for sale in the on-line group-buying sale;

conducting an on-line group-buying sale for the featured item during the featured item time reservation, selling at least a portion of the featured item quantity to one or more buyers; and

supplying the featured items sold in the on-line group-buying sale to one or more buyers by instructing the supplier to provide the items to one or more buyers.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

executing a binding agreement with the supplier regarding the featured item quantity and the featured item time reservation, wherein the binding agreement requires the supplier to retain the featured item quantity for the featured item time reservation.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

providing the supplier with consideration in exchange for the supplier's execution of the binding agreement.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the consideration is at least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

communicating to the supplier payment terms regarding the featured item to be sold during the on-line group-buying sale before conducting the on-line group-buying sale; and  
paying the supplier for a number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

6. (Currently Amended) A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:

receiving from a seller a featured item quantity and a featured item time reservation;  
negotiating with the seller to determine a featured item quantity and a featured item time reservation;  
executing a binding agreement with the seller regarding the featured item quantity and the featured item time reservation, wherein the binding agreement requires the seller to reserve the featured item quantity for the featured item time reservation for sale in the on-line group buying sale;  
receiving a confirmation of the sale of a featured item in an on-line group-buying sale; and  
supplying a featured item sold during the on-line group-buying sale responsive to instructions from the seller.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:

retrieving the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale from a warehouse; and  
packaging the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale for shipment to buyers.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:

receiving consideration from the seller in exchange for executing the binding agreement.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the consideration comprises at least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

10-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
communicating to the seller payment terms regarding the featured items to be sold  
during the on-line group-buying sale.

13. (Withdrawn) A computing system for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:  
a supplier communications module configured to send a supplier a featured item quantity and a featured item time reservation;  
a virtual inventory module configured to receive the supplier's consent to reserve a negotiated featured item quantity and a negotiated featured item time reservation; and  
an on-line group-buying mechanism configured to conduct at least one on-line group-buying sale during the negotiated featured item time reservation, selling at least a portion of the negotiated featured item quantity to one or more buyers.

14. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13 wherein the virtual inventor module is further configured to receive a binding agreement from the supplier regarding the negotiated featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation, wherein the binding agreement requires the supplier to retain the negotiated featured item quantity for the negotiated featured item time reservation.

15. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13, further comprising:  
a data repository configured to retain data regarding the negotiated featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation.

16. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications module is further configured to send shipment instructions to the supplier regarding a number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

17. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications module is further configured to provide the supplier with data regarding the seller's consideration for obtaining the supplier's consent to be contractually bound to retain the negotiated featured item quantity for the negotiated time duration.

18. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 17 wherein the consideration data comprises at least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

19. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated featured item quantity equals the featured item quantity.

20. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated feature item time reservation equals the featured item time reservation.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the featured item is sold in the on-line group-buying sale at the same price to all buyers of the featured item.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the featured item is sold in the on-line group-buying sale at the same price to all buyers of the featured item.

23. (Previously Presented) A method for sourcing an item for an on-line group-buying sale, the method comprising:

- reserving a specified quantity of the item for a specified period of time for sale in the on-line group-buying sale with a supplier of the item;
- selling a plurality of the items during the specified period of time to a plurality of buyers in the on-line group-buying sale; and
- supplying the items bought by buyers in the on-line group-buying sale to the buyers by instructing the supplier to provide the featured items to the buyers.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the featured item is sold in the on-line group-buying sale at the same price to all buyers of the featured item.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein reserving a specified quantity of the item during a specified period of time further comprises forming an agreement with the supplier in which consideration is provided to the supplier in exchange for the supplier's commitment to reserve the specified quantity of the item during the specified period time.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising reserving the specified quantity of the item at a specified price.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of using a computer-implemented system to reserve the specified quantity of the item during the specified period of time with the supplier.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 further comprising the step of using the computer- implemented system to compensate the supplier for the items supplied by the supplier to buyers in the on-line group-buying sale.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of forming an option contract with a supplier of the item, the option for the seller to purchase the specified quantity of the item for the specified period of time and expiring after an option period.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising wherein the featured item is sold in the on-line group-buying sale at the same price to all buyers of the featured item.

31. (Previously Presented) A method of doing business, comprising:  
forming an option contract between a supplier of an item and a seller of the item,  
the  
option for the seller to purchase a quantity of the items and expiring after an  
option period; and

forming a group sale of the item between the seller and a plurality of buyers during the option period wherein all of the buyers pay the same price for the items, wherein the seller provides to the supplier delivery instructions for delivering the items directly from the supplier to the buyers.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the group sale comprises an on-line group-buying sale.

33. (Previously Presented) A method of selling quantities of an item, the method comprising:

forming an option contract to obtain an option to purchase a quantity of an item during an option period;  
receiving, during the option period, individual offers from buyers each for an individual quantity of the item at an individual unit price;  
aggregating individual offers from the buyers to form an aggregated offer having an aggregated quantity of the individual quantities of the offers;  
responsive to an aggregated offer for a quantity of the item above a starting quantity, lowering the unit price of the item below a starting unit price;  
and  
accepting a final aggregated offer for a final quantity of the item at a final unit price, wherein accepting the final aggregated offer automatically executes contracts to sell the item to all the buyers whose offers are reflected in the final aggregated offer, wherein the contracts with the buyers are at the same final unit price and are for the individual quantities requested in the buyers' individual offers.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33 further comprising the steps of:  
receiving individual offers from buyers in an on-line group buying sale; and  
accepting a final aggregated offer for a final quantity of the item, thereby consummating an on-line group buying sale.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33 further comprising the step of using a computer-implemented system to execute contracts to sell the item to all the buyers whose offers are reflected in the final aggregated offer.

36. (Previously Presented) A combination of contractual relations, comprising:  
an option contract between a seller and a supplier granting the seller a right to purchase a reserved quantity of items from the supplier during an option period; and  
a plurality of individual sales contracts between the seller and a plurality of respective, individual buyers, each contract for the sale of a portion of the reserved quantity of the items, wherein the plurality of sales contracts result from an on-line group-buying sale from the seller to the buyers, all of the individual sale contracts at the same unit price, the unit price determined based on the aggregate quantity of items sold in the plurality of sales contracts.